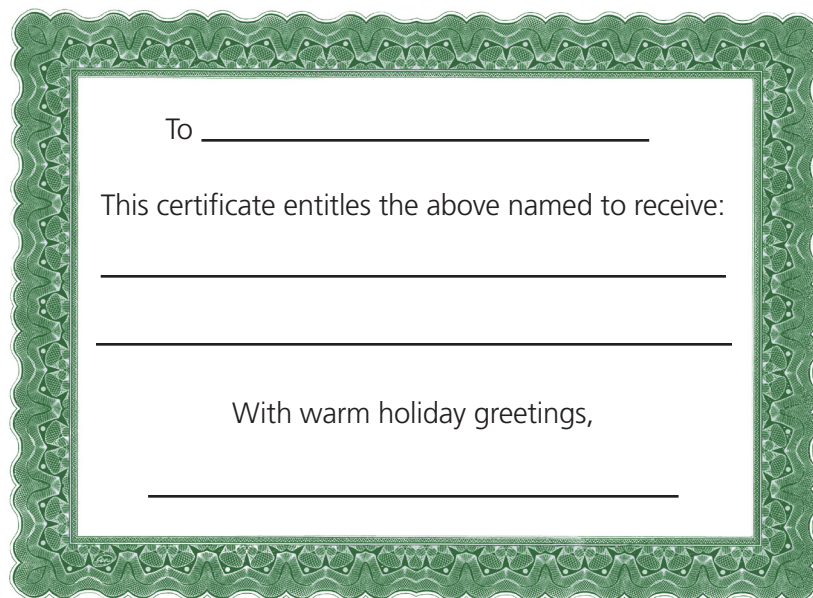


The Ups and Downs of the Holiday Season

Alternative Holiday Celebration Ideas

- Take an outdoor family outing, such as a hike in the woods or a scenic drive.
- Record (audio or video) each family member's memories of holidays past. Save the tapes or DVDs to play back during subsequent seasons.
- Choose a meaningful movie and watch it together as a family.
- Shop for an inexpensive toy or book to wrap and give to a less fortunate child. Leave it at a public drop off site to be collected and distributed. Or shop for food and donate it to the local food shelf.
- Visit a nursing home or a shelter. You don't need to bring gifts, just your companionship. You could even offer to help serve their holiday meal.
- Cover your table with a vinyl cloth and give everyone a permanent magic marker to write personal messages. Continue to use it for other special occasions.
- In lieu of material gifts, give a certificate such as this one. Gifts could range from a back rub to promises to cook and clean!



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To _____

This certificate entitles the above named to receive:

With warm holiday greetings,



To _____

This certificate entitles the above named to receive:

With warm holiday greetings,

The Ups and Downs of the Holiday Season

Estimated Holiday Expenses

<i>Holiday Expense</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Travel	
Entertainment	
Family Meals, Baking Supplies, Food Containers	
Parties Hosted	
Parties Attended	
Gifts for Family	
Gifts for Friends	
Gifts for Neighbors, Teachers, Coworkers, etc.	
Gift Wrap and Gift Bags	
Gift Package Shipping Costs	
Charity / Donations	
Cards and Postage Stamps	
Thank You Cards (and more stamps)	
Decorations	
Other:	
TOTAL:	

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The Ups and Downs of the Holiday Season

Dos and Don'ts for Holiday Health and Well-Being

- **Don't base your happiness on how other friends or family members behave.** Instead, change your response to the behavior. If Uncle Fred usually drinks too much and starts telling bawdy stories, chances are he'll do it again. You can decide to take a walk after dinner or otherwise divert yourself.
- **Do delegate.** Ask for help. Stay at the dining room table and talk instead of clearing the dishes. Lower your neatness and cleanliness standards. Give others the opportunity to take up the slack.
- **Do simplify tasks at this time of year.** Bakery cookies taste almost as good as homemade. Organize shopping rather than mindlessly wandering through the mall without a plan. Use catalogs. Decide what must get accomplished and what can get dropped. Neglect the housecleaning and spend time talking or reading to your loved ones instead.
- **Don't expect things to be perfect.** Allow for tears, frustration, anger, stress and fatigue. The holidays are stressful for everyone, especially kids. Build in down time.
- **Do take care of your body.** Allow yourself to eat good food and to stop when you feel full. Get plenty of exercise and sleep.
- **Don't overindulge in alcohol** as a way to temporarily escape seasonal tensions. This "remedy" has a sneaky way of making matters worse.
- **Do pay attention to your spiritual side.** Live in the moment. Notice the little things that make the moment special.



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The Ups and Downs of the Holiday Season

What Contributes to Stress During the Holidays?

We expect the holidays to be a season of joy, sharing, and wonder. But they can all too often become a season of contradictions, unrealistic expectations, and disappointment. Understanding why this can happen may help you anticipate issues and plan ways to cope. Check each sentence that resonates with your own experience.

- ☐ I or my family members continue to carry out traditional ways of doing things even if they cost too much money, time or effort.
- ☐ The holidays have become so commercial, and that's a turn-off for me.
- ☐ I put myself under a lot of pressure to make the holidays perfect for my family.
- ☐ The holidays require a lot of work that isn't evenly distributed among family members.
- ☐ I want to make the holiday special and meaningful for my loved ones. Too often, they end up angry, frustrated or disappointed instead.
- ☐ The holidays are hard on my wallet. But how do I cut back when gifts are expected?
- ☐ Our family has been through big changes. Things get really tough during the holidays.
- ☐ I'm grieving the loss of a loved one, so the holidays are particularly challenging.
- ☐ Because I'm alone, or have a non-traditional family, I feel that the commercial depiction of holiday happiness leaves me out.
- ☐ I find myself overindulging in food or drink and wind up regretting it later.
- ☐ I work full time and have big family and personal obligations too. How am I expected to squeeze in all of the holiday preparation and activity?
- ☐ Those greeting card ads of perfect families having fun together make my own family come up short in comparison. Why can't we look like that and get along like that?
- ☐ I always feel pressured into making New Year's resolutions and feel lousy knowing I won't be able to keep them.
- ☐ Do pay attention to your spiritual side. Live in the moment. Notice the little things that make the moment special.

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The Ups and Downs of the Holiday Season

Unrealistic and Realistic Self-Talk for the Holidays

How can your unrealistic self-statements be transformed into more realistic thinking?

<i>Unrealistic Thought</i>	<i>Realistic Thought</i>
Other families don't have these problems. What's the matter with us?	Our family, like all families, has its strengths and weaknesses. We bear little resemblance to the families depicted on TV.
I've got to pull out all the stops to make up for not being a stay-at-home parent or custodial parent.	
The needs of other family members should always come before my needs.	
If we don't celebrate the way we always have, it will be disappointing.	
I should be able to accomplish everything the way _____ does.	

Using realistic, empowering internal language as you go through your day can transform your mood and ultimately your behavior.

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